

ALASKA'S REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Definition

Alaska modified its workforce investment system in 2003, transforming the state and two local workforce investment boards into one overarching entity, the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). The new system provides a clear, streamlined and efficient governance structure. However, the board wants to retain the most valuable elements once provided by the local board system and local advisory councils: a strong linkage to local employers, development projects and regional workforce issues.

The goal is for regions to have ownership for their own regional councils. The AWIB is asking that the leaders in the region shape the way the council is defined and how it will work. The Department of Labor & Workforce Development will not allocate funds to the regional councils; rather, they will engage with the councils to make better investment decisions at both the regional and statewide levels. The state is prepared to work closely with the regional councils in support of a stronger overall system of workforce and economic development. The Alaska Workforce Investment Board will be the state's linkage to the regional councils.

Core Expectations

Share Information. Communication with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and sharing information about the priorities in the region is critical, and the councils' reason for existence. Receiving information from the board, about statewide resources, initiatives, policies, system improvements and accountability is equally important. Each region will be expected to contribute regional information for AWIB's annual report on performance, due to the Legislature each February.

Review Outcomes. Regional councils will receive and review regional performance outcome information from the State, including all available information regarding workforce development from all regional partners, including school districts, post-secondary institutions, Native and non-profit training providers, local, state and federal programs including One-Stop Job Centers, and industry-specific partners. Each region should understand how well training program participants are meeting expected performance levels. Following review of performance outcomes, each regional council should develop specific recommendations regarding performance improvement and forward to the AWIB and local service providers.

Set Priorities. Regional councils should define regional priorities for workforce development, and show how they are linked to employer demand, economic development, and education or training strategies. Specifically, each region should:

- Review and assess local employment data, local skills and skill gaps;

- Set priorities to target priority industries and occupations, as well as education and training strategies that best fit the community needs;
- Provide oversight and advice on One-Stop Job Center operations to ensure they're meeting regional and local needs;
- Develop or endorse regional projects that are aligned with the identified regional priorities;
- Submit applications to the Department of Labor & Workforce Development for funding such projects.

Realize Potential. Regional councils will have opportunities to go beyond core expectations by leveraging statewide initiatives and defining their own goals.

Initiatives might include:

- Promoting the use of the Alaska Skills Bank within a region to identify the skills of the local workforce;
- Contributing regional information to Alaska's Youth Resource Map – a geographic information system describing services and resources for youth;
- Using and contributing to the AWIB's Clearinghouse, a database and portal of information resources that integrates existing resources while also providing a more guided path through the workforce investment system;
- Participating in AWIB outreach efforts to increase employer commitment, participation and contributions to workforce development;
- Increasing regional employers' use of the many services offered to businesses by the Alaska Job Center Network;
- Implementing a benchmarking and assessment process to achieve a stronger statewide system for career and technical education.

How to Become a Regional Council

Reach Agreement. Any entity wishing to be considered a regional council should coordinate with key local and regional partners. It is not necessary that regions create a new organization. Existing economic development entities may want to serve as their area's regional council.

Ensure Appropriate Membership. Members should include leaders from:

- Local government;
- Business and industry from small and large employers;
- Economic development entities;
- Proportional geographic areas;
- An AWIB member;
- School districts and post-secondary institutions;
- Native organizations, including non-profits;
- Training and service providers;
- Community-based organizations.

Develop a Short (3-Page) Proposal. The proposal should contain:

- A list of proposed members and a description of the selection process (if a new entity);
- Demonstrate support and connections to existing regional entities, especially local governments, education, and those parties leading economic development efforts in the region;
- Initial plans for meeting core expectations and additional goals defined by the region;
- Recommended “start-up process,” including orientation to economic and workforce development efforts at the state and local levels, as needed by members;
- Ongoing plans for meetings and support to the council;
- Letters of support from key regional partners.

Key Points in Regional Council Development

The AWIB will not arbitrate or answer, “who speaks for the region.”

An AWIB committee will review regional council proposals as they are received and provide initial feedback, comments and recommendations to both the requesting entity and the full board.

The full board will review and endorse or decline proposals as they are forwarded from committee beginning at the next scheduled full board meeting on April 7, 2004.

The board will provide an opportunity for an orientation to workforce and economic development programs and strategies to increase the regional council’s awareness of current initiatives, information regarding local or regional Job Centers, the overall system, and opportunities for linkages.

The regional council and the AWIB will each identify a single point of contact for communications to and from the AWIB and the council.

The regional council will establish strategic priorities and plans, and a timeline to integrate them into AWIB’s strategic plan.

The regional council will establish plans for developing regional priorities, and will work together with the AWIB on information sharing and performance reviews.

Regional councils and AWIB will work together to ensure linkages to appropriate staff (local, state and federal), and the use of continuous improvement mechanisms.

The regional council will plan for annual and “as needed” informational reports.